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ABSTRACT

A discussion examines the importance of communication between non-native speakers (NNS/NNS), reviews relevant theories and issues in intercultural interactions and NNS/NNS interactions, and explores methodological issues in interpreting linguistic and interactional data. The intent is to explore features of communication between NNSs from different linguistic backgrounds by reviewing theories and research concerning native-speaker/non-native speaker (NS/NNS) intercultural interactions. Inferencing theory and communication accommodation theory are examined for their descriptions and generalizations about interactive processes from sociolinguistic and pragmatic/discursive perspectives, and to suggest research questions and hypotheses for further study. Contains 59 references. (MSE)

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Running head: INTERACTIONS IN MULTICULTURAL CONTEXTS

Exploring Intercultural Interactions in Multicultural Contexts: Proposal and Research Suggestions

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Abstract

This proposal consists of three parts: 1) a discussion of the importance of non-native/non-native (NNS/NNS) communication; 2) a review of relevant theories and issues in intercultural interactions and NNS/NNS interactions; 3) a discussion of methodological issues when interpreting linguistic and interactional data. The present study attempts to explore features of communication between non-native speakers from different linguistic backgrounds by reviewing theories, literature, and investigations dealing with intercultural encounters and NS/NNS interactions. Gumperz' inferencing theory (Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz, 1982; Gumperz, 1982; Gumperz, 1992) and Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) are reviewed and examined for their descriptions and generalization of interactive processes from sociolinguistic and pragmatic-discoursive perspectives. Though the two theories differ in nature, CAT is better applied in predicting psychological/linguistic conditions and intergroup environment during interactions, whereas inferencing theory identifies factors in communication problems in intercultural/interethnic interactions and explains why communication problems happen. It is feasible to employ both theories at the same time to understand the on-going process of intercultural/interethnic interactions.

In this paper, the author generalizes communication features of intercultural interactions from previous research findings from different social science disciplines to suggest research questions and hypotheses for future studies. In addition, this paper also advances methodological problems of interpreting intercultural interaction data. Investigators must interpret linguistic and interaction data from the perspective of interaction participants, rather than from the perspective of a linguistically competent observer.

Exploring Intercultural Interactions in Multicultural Contexts:

Proposal and Research Suggestions

As the growth of intercultural contacts around the world increases, the medium of communication used in various intercultural and international encounters to achieve political, diplomatic, business, or technological goals is often different from the mother tongues of either party involved. The phenomenon of non-native speakers from different language backgrounds communicating in a common foreign language is described by Meeuwis (1994) as "third-tongue communication." Little research has been done on such non-native/non-native (NNS/NNS) phenomena. "Third-tongue communication" deserves study due to the increasing reliance on one common language (mostly English) for exchanging information on various institutional and social occasions along with the increasing emphasis on teaching and learning English as a second language.

According to Truchot (1994), about 2 billion people make up the English-speaking world. In addition to people who speak English as their native language, at least 350 million people have English as a second language, and many more have some knowledge of or contact with English. English is very often the lingua franca in business, science, technology, cultural, and sports and leisure activities. The growing importance of English in Europe and other countries can be seen by looking at international organizations, academic occasions and publications, and educational curricula in all the countries of the European and Asian communities (Truchot, 1994, p. 145; Meeuwis, 1994). English is used in international organizations to maintain the flow of communication between the branches of a company or in the presence of executive members of different linguistic origins. In Europe, 85% of the scientific research is published in English; in conferences taking place in foreign countries (other than their native countries), 95% of European scholars delivered their papers in English, even when conferences were taking place in Europe; and at international conferences, 76% of scholars converse in English (Truchot, 1994). English has become an obligatory subject in most of the educational curricula in Europe and other countries. English lessons occupy from four to six hours a week in these curricula; and the starting age for learning English as a second language has decreased to the age of 8, 9, or even younger.

In Asia today, English has become the preferred second tongue. In a recent survey of senior Asian executives by Dow Jones Asia Dialogues (a joint venture of The Far Eastern Economic Review, The Asian Wall Street Journal, and Asian Business News), fully 93% agreed that English will retain its place as the language of Asian business. English is not only the language of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum and the Association of Southeast

Asian Nations, of customs declarations and arrival cards, of air-traffic controllers and maritime agreements, of international contracts and technical journals, but of the future, of opportunity, of money (McGurn, March 21 1996). Unlike the situation in Europe, where French still holds an official status, in Asia English has no serious rival because the many dialects in China and Southeastern Asia make the unification of Asian language impossible. Nowadays, McGurn writes, "Asians who learn English today are learning it not to speak with Americans or Britain but to talk to one another" (p. 41). Within Asia alone, however, many quite distinctive forms of English have been flourishing for years, such as Japlish, Chinglish, and Singlish. All these mix the normal form and grammatical structure of English with their own accents, dialects, and local jargons.

"Third-tongue" (NNS/NNS) communication, though often treated as an intercultural interaction like native speaker/non-native speaker (NS/NNS) interactions, is a phenomenon which has not yet been explored. While NNS/NNS communication shares many common features with NS/NNS interactions, the two kinds of interactions should not be treated as one phenomenon. In NNS/NNS interactions all participants attempt to establish new communication strategies and speech conventions through linguistic symbols which none of them are familiar with; when their communicative performance and participation will not be evaluated or determined by the majority culture, the intercultural interactions are almost certain to be different from NS/NNS interaction. When economic or political needs force people to communicate with people speaking in a different language and living by different rules and norms, they must become capable of managing or adapting to diverse communicative situations, as well as interacting with people with whom they have no personal acquaintance, to acquire a small measure of personal and social control (Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz, 1982a). They must set aside their old identities and establish new communication strategies and speech conventions to gain attention or power in the majority society. Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz (1982a) claim that new communication strategies and speech conventions usually symbolize group membership and a set of values mixing old ties with new. When one party in an interaction is native to the language being used, Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz (1982a) find that the right to speak and the obligation to answer are either predetermined or at least strictly constrained even though an illusion of equality, mutuality, and cordiality may prevail. Communicative performance in such NS/NNS occasions is subjectively evaluated and interpreted by the native speakers.

While the importance of English as a communication medium in intercultural contexts grows, research exploring the linguistic problems in such intercultural encounters comes mostly from second language (L2)

acquisition and sociolinguistic studies . Issues which are commonly discussed, such as foreigner talk, miscommunication, and meaning negotiations, are mostly formulated from the viewpoint of native speakers. Many studies of intercultural interactions concentrate on structural and grammatical deficiencies from the perspective of second language acquisition[1] (Tarone, Cohen, & Guy, 1983; Pica, 1988; Pica, 1994; Young, 1995). However, the theoretical framework of intercultural interactions, especially those between non-native speakers communicating in languages other than their mother tongue, is still unclear, though investigations into second language acquisition and research from sociolinguistic perspectives have contributed much to the understanding of one kind of intercultural interactions, NS/NNS interactions. Reviewing and generalizing from literature and research in sociolinguistics and second language acquisition may provide a baseline for NNS/NNS interactions. Research on "third tongue" (NNS/NNS) communication can expand on previous findings about NS/NNS interactions to explore phenomena occurring between non-native speakers. The present study attempts to explore features of communication between non-native speakers from different linguistic backgrounds by reviewing theories, literature, and investigations dealing with intercultural encounters and NS/NNS interactions. Gumperz' inferencing theory (Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz, 1982; Gumperz, 1982; Gumperz, 1992) and Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) are reviewed and examined for their descriptions and generalization of interactive processes from the sociolinguistic and pragmatic-discoursal perspective. Though the two theories differ in nature — CAT is better applied in predicting psychological/linguistic conditions and intergroup environment during interactions, whereas inferencing theory identifies factors in communication problems in intercultural/interethnic interactions and explains why communication problems happen — it is feasible to employ both theories at the same time to understand the on-going process of intercultural/interethnic interactions.

Inferencing Theory

Gumperz (1992) proposed that communication is a situated interpretation constrained by what is said and how it is interpreted within the context. Inferences drawn from communication can be validated only in relation to other background assumptions. Inferencing, thus, is a presupposition-based and suggestive assessment of communicative intent. The "background assumptions" are socially and interactively constructed in the process of conversation by considering sequences, conversational management, and negotiation of meaning. The inferencing

[1] The "second language acquisition"(SLA) perspective, here, refers to native speakers' or theorists' judgments of the acceptability of non-native speakers' utterances. Current SLA literature focuses extensively on the issues of metalinguistic awareness (e.g., the "correct" or "improved" utterances made by non-native speakers) and

process treats verbal exchanges as "contextualization-based, on-line, discourse-level inferencing rather than just concentrating on regularities of sequential organization across speech exchanges" (p. 231) in order to show how knowledge of grammar, language use, and rhetorical conventions enter into conversations and how the perception of communicative signs affect understanding in everyday conversations. In the inferencing process, the identification of socio-culturally familiar activities of conversational exchanges, called contextualization, help interlocutors evaluate messages and sequencing patterns in relation to contextualization cues. It is the matching between contextualization cues, previous interactive experience, and/or habitual or instinctive linguistic language of interlocutors that creates "co-occurrence expectations" in the interaction (Gumperz, 1982). When discussing conversational inference, Gumperz (1982) notes that signals in one context should be explicitly or implicitly recognized and conformed to others' expectations as a culturally identifiable activity so that interlocutors may fit individual contributions into an overall theme. In Gumperz's terms, contextualization cues mostly rely on speech products, for example, prosody (intonation, stress or accentuation, and pitch register shifts); paralinguistic signs of tempo, pausing and hesitation, and conversational synchrony; code choices within a linguistic repertoire; and choice of lexical forms or formulaic expressions (Gumperz, 1992a, p. 231).

Contextualization cues work communicatively because interactional participants are constantly making several degrees of generality in the inferential process. Gumperz (1992) introduces three levels of generality in the inferencing process—the perceptual level, the speech act (or sequential) level, and the framing (using Goffman's term) or activity level—though he also clarifies that these different levels always merge in daily interactions and he proposes these three levels for the convenience of analysis, to elaborate how contextualization cues enter into the inferencing process. The different levels of generality identified by Gumperz and his associates are reviewed below to show how these different levels work in inferencing processes and how these levels are employed in analyzing intercultural interactions.

The perceptual level of inferencing separates shared or known items of information from new information and distinguishes between main points and side sequences of information. Inferencing processes focusing on the perceptual level mainly aim at how auditory or visual signals function in a certain context. On the perceptual level, auditory or visual signals are divided into information units (e.g., tone stressing) and phrases before these signals can be interpreted. Gumperz, Aulakh, and Kaltman (1982) find that perception of the relevant signs and of their

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grammaticality judgments (Gass, Cohen, &Taron, 1994; Foster-Cohen, 1993; Birdsong, 1989; Chaudron, 1983).

signaling value varies from cultures to cultures, even among speakers of the same language. They examined recordings of natural conversations of an Indian social worker born in Malaysia and concluded that Indian English sometimes sounds odd to English ears because different conventions govern use of lexicons, syntax, and prosody. Though such variant signal systems sometimes cause misunderstanding, audiences of this Indian speaker could perceive and adapt to such differences without problems by providing prompt responses or supporting comments (e.g., "yes," or repetitions of her words) because the interaction was rhythmically coordinated between audiences and the speaker.

The speech act (or sequential) level of the inferencing process yields situated interpretations of communicative intent arising from direct inferences or indirect or metaphoric inferences. Inferences which "go beyond what is overtly expressed through lexical content are included" in this level (Gumperz, 1992, p. 233). Not only words uttered, but also contexts, prosody, and syntactic and lexical choices signaled in the interactions should be assessed. Examinations of the inferencing process at the sequential level should focus on the "communicative intent" rather than grammatical or logical oddities of the speaker. Gumperz (1992) examines an argument between a native English speaker and an ESL (English as a Second Language) student and discovers that communication problems occur in this argument mainly because each interlocutor uses different contextualization strategies, strategies which each draws from his own language backgrounds and interpretive conventions. The NS, for instance, uses contouring, pausing, and tempo shifts to give rhetorical force to his argument, whereas the NNS uses interruptions as a kind of pleading. When the NNS fails to understand how such speech features (e.g., contouring, pausing, tempo shifts) function, and the NS is unable to interpret the intent of the NNS's constant interruptions, misunderstanding and conflicts arise. Gumperz concludes that misunderstanding usually occurs when interlocutors recognize, or employ, different contextualization conventions. Gumperz, Aulakh and Kaltman (1982) use the term "communicative intent" to describe how speakers express themselves by using different syntactical orders or linguistic devices. On analysis, Gumperz et al. (1982) find that the Indian speaker sometimes uses a string of noun phrases or conjunctions which makes the discourse sound odd and difficult to understand for the native English speaker precisely because "*she speaks the way she does in order to be understood and to elicit appropriate responses*" (p. 27, italics in original). Instead of judging Indian English discourse as loose, illogical, and lacking adequate structural clarity, one should process direct and indirect contextualization cues as resources in the inferencing process.

To look at a global or activity level of making inferences is to aim at signal expectation in the interaction based on contexts and the quality of relations. This level of inferencing process involves assuming or expecting certain behaviors to resolve ambiguities at the perceptual or sequential levels. In other words, the inferencing process on the global level not only frames a phenomenon and examines perceptions, speech acts, and sequencing under the consideration of contexts and different signal systems, but also generalizes inferences from a broader view. Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz (1982) cite a committee meeting involving two native English speakers and three non-native English speakers (East Indians). Though all of these NNSs speak with strong accents and with frequent hesitation, pauses, and incomplete sentences, these efficient non-native speakers adapt to the rhetorical structure of native English speakers by referring to a previous speaker's remarks or to the basic issues defined by the first speaker and by using meta-comments (e.g., "you can't say"; "and this is precisely"; "the fact is"; "what I'm saying is"; "I mean") to replace the accent placement and prosody of native English speech. The non-native speaker who is evaluated as inefficient, abrupt, impulsive, and rude seems to assume the other participants have known and followed his logic and rhetorical structures in their own minds. From the perspective of native English speakers, the rude, inefficient non-native speakers, evaluated by others, seems to rely only on his listeners' knowledge of the issue and the rude, inefficient speaker's indirect contextualization cues (e.g., tone stressing and using personal emotional feeling to assess his audiences) to carry his argument, which is not followed by his listeners; or worse, his argument does not even appeal to NSs at all. West Indians, however, understand this type of argumentative style of making clear how one feels without "beating around the bush."

Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz' (1982b) analysis not only takes into account a global level of generality by focusing on the perceptions of interaction participants, speech acts and sequencing, and situations and contexts, but also brings up problematic issues which usually occur in intercultural interactions, such as "co-occurrence expectation," communicative flexibility, and interference. These issues should be noticed because they influence the capability of assessing different levels of inferences. As has been mentioned above, possible ambiguities in either perceptual or sequential levels can only be resolved when using a global level of generality. Without knowing what is expected and how to be flexible to listen and understand, one will encounter difficulties in making inferences effectively.

In interethnic/intercultural interactions, the greatest difficulty is usually caused by inability to establish "co-occurrence expectation" due to different perceptions of contextualization conventions. In various institutional

settings involving different ethnic groups, communication problems should not simply be blamed on linguistic fluency. Rather, the key issue in interethnic/intercultural interactions becomes how efficiently participants from different linguistic backgrounds can adapt to their partners' rhetorical conventions (details will be discussed later) and prosodic cues to achieve mutual understanding. Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz (1982a) call this direct or indirect adaptation process to the audience or to the scene *communicative flexibility*.

Several investigations of intercultural/interethnic communication (Gumperz, 1982; Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 1982b; Tyler & Davies, 1990; Meeuwis, 1994) find that the inferencing process is always triggered by intercultural communication. Interference (or, as Meeuw's) terms it, language transfer) refers to the transfer of grammatical features or rhetorical or prosodic conventions from the speaker's native language to the second language. Interference will sometimes decrease native speakers' efficiency in evaluating communication. Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz (1982b) find interference not only affects how interlocutors perceive the performance of their partners but also hinder interlocutors from different linguistic or cultural backgrounds in making inferences.

A good example of how interference influenced the credibility of the non-native speakers and how it causes difficulty for native speakers to understand was seen in the case of a Philippine physician accused of negligence in reporting child abuse. When examining courtroom testimony, Gumperz (1982) found that the defendant (a NNS), though competent and fluent in written and spoken English, sometimes provided confusing answers during his testimony; these were largely the result of interference from his native language (Tagalog) in such areas as present-past tense usage, yes/no interjections, pronoun usage, and prosodic systems. When the defendant testified in a Navy hearing,[2] his uses of tenses and pronouns created difficulties. On many occasions, a past tense question received a present tense reply and the questioner had to repeat the questions with a past tense verb to confirm whether the defendant had said what he meant. For instance, when the attorney asked him whether he was aware of a list of rules, called Navy Instruction, for conducting the day-to-day operation of the hospital, the defendant answered, "I'm not aware." The attorney thus had to confirm with him whether he meant he was not aware of these instructions during that time or whether he did not know this rule at all. Again, when the attorney asked whether he felt the cause of the child's injuries was sunburn or thermofluid burn, he answered, "I still feel it was due to sunburn"(p.

[2] The Philippine physician was charged with negligence in the emergency room because he did not report suspected child abuse to the hospital and the police when the child, who later died in hospital, was brought in with second-degree sun burn. The child was later found to have been abused by his step-father. Much time and testimony was expended during the hearing to determine whether symptoms for which the physician treated the child indicated unusual signs of burning or abuse.

174). Usage of yes/no interjections transferred from the defendant's native language also created uncertainties and inconsistencies in his testimony. The questioner or attorney, on many occasions, had to clear up uncertainties by rephrasing questions in the positive. For example, when asking, "It's the testimony by Lt. . . . that you did not attend the briefing," questioners were confused by the answer, "*Yes.*" The questioner thus needed to rephrase, "iYou did attend it?" The defendant finally answers, "No." By cross-culturally analyzing Taglog communication and linguistic systems, the researchers found that the defendant's problems with English verb tense, pronunciation, yes/no interjections, and tone of making statements or expressions were transferred from his native language. When such signs violate either the expected rules of native English speakers or the inferencing systems of the NNS's first language, communication problems will result.

Sometimes, bilingual or bidialectual minorities are stereotyped and stigmatized according to inferences of the majority culture. Gumperz (1992) examines four job interviews conducted by native English speakers. Gumperz observes that the problems in these interviews lie in the failure of conversational negotiation processes. Both interviewers and interviewees are dealing with, not simply a lack of linguistic knowledge or prejudice, but different rhetorical strategies. As a result, both interviewers and interviewees seem unable to negotiate shared understandings about matters that are crucial to the interviews' success. The three NNS applicants who failed the interviews are native speakers of various Indian languages. Gumperz examines the interview processes based on turn-taking organization, sequential organization, conversational negotiation, conversational inference, and contextualization cues. He finds that interpretive difficulties between native interviewers and non-native interviewees usually involve different rhetorical strategies. Native English interviewers usually feel their communicative expectations were violated and find it difficult to follow NNSs' arguments. Interviewees who cannot catch contextualization cues, such as the interviewerís placement of accent or stress, are less likely to provide the information the interviewer is asking for.

Summary

Though Gumperz and his colleagues have not been integrated in a theory format, investigations of inferencing processes, especially those focusing on speech features and contextualization cues, have pointed to problems frequently occurring in intercultural contexts, such as "interference," "co-occurrence expectation," and "communicative flexibility." Gumperz' analysis of intercultural communication examines three different levels of inferential processes: perceptual level, speech act (sequential) level, and the global framing level. At each level of

generating inferences, different perceptions of signal systems, incapability of interpreting others' communicative intent, and difficulty with the logic and prosody of native English speakers are recognized as problems in intercultural communication. Taking these findings in native/non-native (NS/NNS) interactions, future research could use this model to explore NNS/NNS phenomena.

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) is a theory employing social, psychological, and linguistic variables to explain social interactions in interpersonal and intergroup contexts. CAT, when compared with other communication theories in terms of domain and boundary, thoroughly provides sets of predictions and explanations for the socio-linguistic behaviors taken by the interlocutors; for instance, why, when, and how interlocutors react from the socio-psychological level (e.g., motivation, receiver's perception), the socio-cultural/socio-political level (e.g., accent, skin colors, stereotypes), or the individual level (e.g., intimacy degree, conversational needs).

CAT is an extension of Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT). The original goal of Speech Accommodation Theory (Giles, 1973; Giles, 1979; Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977a; Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977b; Giles & Byrne, 1982) was to demonstrate how social cognitive processes, such as perceptions of the other person or desires for social approval, influence the dynamics of speech diversity in social settings. CAT (Gallois, Franklyn-Stokes, Giles, & Coupland, 1988; Gallois, Giles, Jones, Cargile, & Ota, 1995) extends the domain of SAT from social, psychological, and linguistic variables to the nonverbal and discoursal dimensions of social interactions. The theoretical goal of CAT is to analyze and explore the links between interpersonal encoding strategies and interpretive procedures by emphasizing the influence of culture/intergroup history on psychological/linguistic convergence and divergence (Gallois, Giles, Jones, Cargile, & Ota, 1995).

CAT proposes that interactants will select different sociolinguistic strategies by attuning accents or controlling length of utterances of vocal density to anticipate their recipient's performance (Giles, Mulac, Bradac, & Johnson, 1986; Street & Giles, 1982; Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991). To generalize, CAT predicts that speakers' accommodation behaviors will be influenced by the following: the micro- and/or macro-context, speakers' perception or evaluation of their interlocutors, and speakers' motivations, or needs to gain the other's approval or to distinguish their own social group from the interlocutorsi social groups. Conversely, the receiver's perception or evaluation of the sender's social group and communication behaviors will also influence the sociolinguistic strategies which the receiver will take to interact with interlocutors. CAT portrays causal

interrelationships between socio-historical context factors (e.g., intergroup identity, cultural orientation), individual/group motivations (e.g., social approval), socio-psychological states (e.g., stereotypes, perceptions of other groups, interpersonal orientation), attribution/labeling (e.g., over-/under-/counter-accommodation), and accommodation behaviors (e.g., approximations, interpretability strategies, discourse management strategies, and interpersonal control strategies).

Sociolinguistic strategies proposed by SAT and CAT which speakers would use in interactions include the following: approximation strategies, interpretability strategies, discourse management strategies, and interpersonal control strategies. These sociolinguistic strategies focus on how communicative attuning and adaptive processes of interlocutors increase or decrease the social and sociolinguistic distance of interlocutors (Coupland, Coupland, & Giles, 1991, p. 26). All these attuning strategies are tied to various sorts of *addressee focus*. Coupland, Coupland, and Giles (1991) do not clarifying how these different sociolinguistic strategies differ from or relate to one another or explain how the concept of accommodation used in CAT was derived from existing literature; they imply, however, that such sociolinguistic strategies developed later in CAT, emerging from the core concepts of psychological and linguistic convergence and divergence, which are elaborated on in approximation strategies. Accommodation, in fact, is a general on the convergent and divergent continuum. Sociolinguistic strategies proposed in CAT are accommodative tactics applied by interlocutors based on the contextual needs or concerns of the addressee (e.g., the goal and purpose of the interaction, the addresseeis perceived competence, or the social-historical stereotypes interloctuors have of each other).

The first kind of strategies proposed by CAT, approximation strategies, focus on how the speaker *perceives* his or her partners based on the speaker's stereotypes or perceptions of performance competence of the interlocutor. Approximation strategies include speech convergence, divergence, maintenance, and complementarity.

The first of these, speech convergence, refers to individuals adapting to each other's speech features and competence in interactions, for example, adjusting speech rates, pause and utterance lengths, choice of language system, or dialect features. Speech divergence, in contrast, refers to the process by which speakers accentuate linguistic differences between themselves and others. According to CAT, convergent or divergent speech behaviors always relate to economic advantages and social rewards. For instance, Van den Berg (1985), investigating language/dialect choices and code switching in business contexts, found that salespersons converged to the language that customers used (either Mandarin Chinese or Taiwanese dialects) more than customers to salespersons.

Interestingly, Jones, Gallois, Callan, and Barker (1995) found that in Australian academic contexts, male lecturers tended to dominate (diverge) in terms of talk time and nonverbal behaviors (e.g., turn length and speech rate), whereas female lecturers controlled the interactions by suppressing their own disclosure and offering the floor to their partners (convergence).

A later development of SAT and CAT divides accommodative acts into linguistic (or communicative)/psychological and subjective/objective convergence and divergence (see Table 1) in order to analyze accommodation behaviors, especially convergent and divergent behaviors, in detail (Thakerar & Giles, 1981; Thakerar, Giles, & Cheshire, 1982, p. 238; Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991, p. 36; Giles & Coupland, 1991).

Table 1. Some linguistic and psychological parameters of accommodation (Giles, Coupland & Coupland, 1991, p. 36)

		Linguistic		
	Convergence		Divergence	
	Objective	Subjective	Objective	Subjective
Psychological				
Convergence	A	B	C	D
Divergence	E	F	G	H

The dimension of objective accommodation refers to independently measured speech or communicative shifts moving toward (convergence) or away from (divergence) interactional partners, whereas the subjective dimension refers to individuals' psychological *beliefs* about whether they or others are converging or diverging (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991, p. 14). Subjective accommodation is an internal psychological process of speakers' intent of convergence to or divergence from their interlocutors resulting from macro intergroup perceptions and evaluations (e.g., stereotypes), or micro individual discourse contexts. In Table 1, categories A, B, G, and H are examples of pure convergence and divergence. Communicative and psychological accommodations,

however, are not usually moving toward the same direction. E and F show convergent behaviors with divergent intent, whereas C and D present psychological convergence resulting in divergent communicative behaviors. In SAT and CAT, the notion of psychological and linguistic incongruity in convergence and divergence is called complementarity (Gallois, Franklyn-Stokes, Coupland, & Giles, 1988; Gallois, Giles, Jones, Cargile, & Ota, 1991).

Speech complementarity, another approximation strategy, accentuates valued sociolinguistic differences between interlocutors in order to organize events into meaningful categories (cognitive organization) and maintain one's group or social identity (Thakerar, Giles, Cheshire, 1982; Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991). Unlike divergent behaviors, which occur when speakers adopt behaviors opposite to their interlocutors in order to keep social distance from their interlocutors, make their interlocutors less powerful, or entice their interlocutors to adopt a different communication style, complementarity occurs when interactants mutually attempt to maintain their social differences (Giles, Mulac, Bradac, & Johnson, 1987). Unlike divergent speech behaviors, which usually create unstable exchanges and finally lead to the termination of the interaction, communicative complementarity can maintain stability throughout the interaction (Giles, Mulac, Bradac, & Johnson, 1987; Petterson, 1983).

In later CAT, approximation strategies have evolved from simple convergence, divergence, maintenance, and complementarity strategies to include interpretability strategies (Coupland, Coupland, Giles, & Henwood, 1988). Interpretability strategies involve how speakers interpret the performance competence of their conversational partners and, based on speakers' perception of partners' competence, modify the complexity of speech, syntax, voice pitch, loudness, and/or tempo. Baby-talk, patronizing talk to the elderly (Giles, Coupland, Coupland, 1991; Ryan, Giles, Bartolucci, & Henwood, 1986), and foreigner talk to other ethnic groups (Ferguson, 1971; Zuengler, 1991; discussed further below) can best be described as interpretability strategies.

Another sociolinguistic strategy proposed by CAT is discourse management, which involves attending to the addressee's conversational needs. Based on the speaker's perception or stereotype of the conversational needs of recipients, a speaker may facilitate a partner's contribution to ongoing talking either by offering turns, eliciting information, repairing problematical sequences, and working on positive or negative face threats to a recipient (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Penman, 1990), or by providing backchannels or convérging on conversation topics which both conversational partners are familiar with.

A final category of strategies proposed by CAT is interpersonal control strategies; this term refers mainly to tactics or strategies, such as interruptions or different forms of address which interlocutors employ to modify the relationship of the roles between interlocutors.

Confusion has arisen in attempting to differentiate between accommodation behaviors and sociolinguistic strategies employed by individuals to interact with their interlocutors, and this confusion is not fully clarified in either the literal descriptions or the theoretical models of CAT (e.g., Gallois, Franklyn-Stokes, Coupland, & Giles, 1988; Gallois, Giles, Jones, Cargile, & Ota, 1995). CAT assumptions and models rarely explain and clarify how and why individuals' perception or evaluation of their addressees ultimately influences the sociolinguistic strategies used by interlocutors. This confusion about CAT is discussed by Giles, Coupland, and Coupland (1991) and Giles and Coupland (1991). Among different sociolinguistic strategies identified in CAT, approximation strategies center on communication patterns, or perceptions or expectations of the other's performance competence. Interpretability, discourse management, and interpersonal control strategies, however, involve not only the interpretive competence of others, but also the addressee's social categories and memberships, or inferences which derive from accent, lexical diversity, and skin color. In CAT, interpretability, discourse management, and interpersonal control are thus seen as "attuning strategies" which are used in order to maintain interactional flow and relational status. Each set of sociolinguistic strategies could be either convergent, divergent, maintenance, or complementary behaviors to fulfill the needs of interlocutors. Once one party misperceives or misinterprets the competence or motivation of their interlocutors, different sociolinguistic strategies will be taken.

Summary

CAT is considered relevant and useful in sociolinguistics and communication because, first, the broad inclusion of individual, psychological, social, and linguistic factors have almost covered the phenomenon of face-to-face interactions, not only at the interpersonal, but also at the intergroup/inter-ethnic level; and second, CAT has been employed in various institutional contexts, e.g., radio broadcasting (Bell, 1991); courtroom (Linell, 1991); health institutions (Street, 1991; Hamilton, 1991; Ferrara, 1991); second-language learning (Zuengler, 1991); and immigrant adaptation (Gallois & Callan, 1991). The broad inclusion of diverse factors makes the theory friendly to researchers in that it can explain various levels of interactions, from the interactions between different ethnic groups to the interactions between dyads, and predict various communication outcomes by employing the existing data (e.g., history, social status/identity/norms, behaviors), depending on the scope of different projects. The popularity

of CAT in institutional contexts helps to suggest the usefulness of the theory in explaining relational alternatives, developments, difficulties, and outcomes in different contexts and settings. CAT is useful in NNS/NNS interactions in that it can aim at explaining interpersonal and intergroup perceptions of interlocutors by examining their communication behaviors (over/under/contra- accommodation). The theory can contribute to the current project by suggesting causal-predictive connections between interpersonal and intergroup perceptions and communication behaviors. Such connections may supply rational explanations in observations and analyses.

Intercultural Contexts in a Sociolinguistic Framework

An increasing amount of research on second-language acquisition (SLA) has shifted away from studying aspects and behaviors of learners' second language behavior to second language learners as they interact with others. Long (1983a; 1983b) and Varonis and Gass (1985a; 1985b) have suggested that linguistic activities and modified interactions between native speakers and non-native speakers are an important baseline for second language acquisition. Zuengler (1991) asserts the importance of further study of NS/NNS interactions because much research on NS/NNS interactions has been either a-theoretical or confined to linguistic descriptions of the NNSsi or NSsi speech. By reviewing issues which are commonly discussed and well explored in intercultural interactions--especially NS/NNS interactions—such as "foreigner talk" (linguistic adjustments made by NNSs to accommodate NSs' comprehension and performance), misunderstanding (or miscommunication), and negotiation of meanings during the communication process — this project expects to generalize features and characteristics from NS/NNS conversations and interactions to employ in observing interactional phenomena between NNSs.

Foreigner Talk

Foreigner Talk (FT) is defined as " 'the variety of language that is regarded by a speech community as primarily appropriate for addressing foreigners' (Ferguson & DeBose, 1977, p. 103) and used by speakers of a language to outsiders who are felt to have very limited command of a language or no knowledge of it at all' (Ferguson, 1971, p. 43)" (Lattey, 1989). According to this definition, FT primarily focuses on aspects of content and speech features. The content aspect of FT includes concerns about what one might say in particular imagined contexts, whereas the speech features aspect of FT examines actual use of language in a communication situation.

By examining a number of features of FT, Lattey (1989) identifies three processes commonly involved in English and German: simplifying, clarifying, and expressive identifying. A simplifying process of English FT according to Ellis (1985), Hatch (1983), and Larsen-Freeman (1985), includes the use of short, simple sentences,

readjustment of word order and less use of contractions. While sharing similar characteristics with English FT, German FT also has its own simplifying characteristics, such as "use of nouns instead of pronouns as an attempt at concretizing, simplification of the lexicon, and adjustment of word order to subject + object(s) + infinitive"(Lattey, 1989, p. 95). Clarifying processes in interactions refer to the negotiation of meanings between interlocutors. In English FT, a clarifying process is described as repetition, restatement, simple and analytical paraphrase, confirmation checking, and/or slower, more distinct articulation. While almost all clarifying features in English FT are found in German FT, Lattey finds that Germans more frequently use repetitions and restatements when conversing with NNSs to clarify their own and others' meanings. The expressive-identifying process is the least well-defined process of FT. Though it is described as a type of empathetic communication, which employs lexical items (e.g., "sweetie" or "honey" in English, or "*du*" in German) to reduce the perceived hierarchy of foreigners, very few empirical investigations can verify and explain the operation of this process.

Long (1981) has searched for differences of discourse structures and relative frequency of syntactical and morphological features between NS/NS interactions and NS/NNS interactions (foreigner talk discourse, FTD) in informal conversations. Based on previous research assumptions and findings that NSs modify their discourse to produce comprehensible input for NNSs, Long attempts to investigate how NSs modified their interactional structures when they interact with NNS as opposed to other NSs and how these structural differences affect syntactical and morphological speech features. Long found that structural differences exist in topic-continuing and topic-initiating moves. Talk about any one topic in FTD was found briefer. Interactions involving NNSs change topics more often than interactions involving only NSs. Significantly more questions than statements were used to open talk on new topics in FTD. FTD also employed significantly more yes/no and "or-choice" questions for three reasons. First, NSs perceive the use of questions as topic initiation as helping them to signal, and NNSs to recognize, that a new speech turn is approaching. Second, in English conversation, the question-answer sequence is a distinguishing feature showing that the first utterance has been spoken and the second must be immediately provided. Third, an "or-choice" question lightens the burden of the NNS because the second speaker may formulate his or her utterance according to the previous propositional content, which is a forceful tool to ensure the NNSs' participation.

Beebe and Giles' ethnolinguistic model (1984) theorizes that NSs usually are more active and dominant in most NS/NNS interactions because NSs have a higher linguistic or ethnolinguistic status compared to that of the

NNS. A study of interactional participation and content expertise involving face-to-face interactions between NSs and NNSs reveals that different levels of content expertise lead to some differences in dominance patterns (Zuengler, 1989). Zuengler and Bent (1991) confirm that content knowledge, when perceived as unequal, is an important factor influencing how actively NSs and NNSs participate in an interaction with each other. In addition, when equal expertise pairs discuss a content domain outside the major field, the apparent complementary roles of NNSs and NSs may occur (e.g., the NS may become a speaker and the NNS a listener). They further point out that identical participation of NSs and NNSs is a difficult construct to operationalize; for example, in the context of equal domain knowledge, back-channels and pause fillers might exhibit NNSs' inability to verbalize while they still retain the dominant role in conversations. Zuengler and Bent identify amounts of talk, fillers, back-channels, interruptions, resisting interruptions, and topic moves as controlling and participating features in NNS/NS interactions. Results of their investigation show that NSs participate more when both interlocutors have relatively equal knowledge of conversational topics. The relative content "experts," whether NSs or NNSs, show more conversational participation.

Miscommunication

Miscommunication has been identified as the most common communication problem (Gass & Varonis, 1991; Gumperz, 1978; Gumperz, 1982). Gass and Varonis (1991) attempt to clarify terminology confusions about miscommunication in order to avoid using the same term for different phenomena or different terms for the same phenomenon. They categorize problematic communication into two broad types: non-engagement and miscommunication. Non-engagement refers to instances when conversational partners avoid interacting with one another by turning around or changing in other ways to prevent difficult and stressful conversations, or when a conversational interaction is suddenly terminated by one of interlocutors "because he or she realizes that continuing the conversation is not in his or her best interest"(p. 124). The other type of problematic communication is named "miscommunication," which means a mismatch between the speaker's intention and the hearer's interpretation. A mismatch between the speaker's intention and the hearer's interpretation will result in either misunderstanding, which involves "simple disparity between the speaker's and hearer's semantic analysis of a given utterance" (Milroy, 1984, p. 15) without the participants' recognition of communication problems, or incomplete understanding, which refers to a situation where one or more participants has perceived that something has gone wrong in the communication (Milroy, 1984).

Bank, Ge, and Banker (1991) identify four major causes of miscommunication in intercultural encounters: culture difference, linguistic failures, failed pragmatics, and problems of identity. Under these four headings, the following section will review literature and investigations relating to miscommunication in intercultural interactions.

Culture difference

Because message interpretations for conversational participants are culturally bounded, participants who are short of relevant background knowledge or are not familiar with others' interpretation process will have difficulty in assessing others' communicative intentions. "Interference" refers to a NNS making a grammatical and prosodic transfer from his or her native language to the second language (Gumperz, 1982); this results in various kinds of miscommunication in intercultural interactions. To analyze and solve these difficulties, Gumperz (1975) proposed that one should try variant interpretations from participants' linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds. Tyler and Davies (1990), investigating miscommunication between a Korean teaching assistant and an American undergraduate student, found that the Korean interlocutor organized his conversational structure based on socio-pragmatic norms from his first language (e.g., inductive and collaborative organization of argument), which further influenced his interpretation of responses from his American undergraduate; accordingly, the American undergraduate student in this study interpreted the responses from the teaching assistant as cold, authoritarian, and defensive. Communication breakdown and miscommunication frequently occur when listeners experience difficulty constructing a consistent interpretation of the text (the content of conversation itself) or when speakers use different signal conventions (e.g., sorting out the main idea from detail) to express their ideas (Gumperz, 1982; Tyler & Bro, 1993). Tyler and Bro (1993) report that American speakers perceive non-native discourse-structuring cues (e.g., topic-comment, inductively organized patterns) more difficult to follow and interpret than a more deductive-organized version.

Linguistic failure

The second area causing miscommunication is the lack of shared linguistic systems. A great deal of research in linguistics focuses on how non-native speakers produce comprehensible inputs (e.g., morphemes, words, utterances) when interacting with native speakers. In an analysis of interactions between speakers from different linguistic backgrounds both communicating in their second language ("third tongue communication"), Meeuwis (1994) discovers several communicative problems resulting from socio-linguistic and socio-pragmatic interference: yes/no confusion, topic prominence, and response behavior.

In Meeuwis' investigations, preference in answering systems usually results in yes/no confusion in communication processes, which further results in interpretation and understanding problems in intercultural encounters. Many miscommunication situations occur when speakers with different language systems transfer their answering systems from their first languages. In the agreement-disagreement system of East Asian languages (e.g., Chinese, Japanese and Korean) and African Bantu languages, "answers are based on the respondent's agreement or disagreement with the statement form (negative or positive) of the question" (Meeuwis, 1994, p. 64), whereas the positive-negative answering system of Western European languages (e.g., English and Dutch) provides positive or negative answers based on whether the speaker intends to affirm or negate the statement. If the statement form of the answer's sentence is positive, then a positive response is used, and vice versa.

Another problem in intercultural interactions, according to Meeuwis' analysis, is the topic-prominent and topic-comment structure of the sentence. In Meeuwis' study, communication breakdowns occur in several conversations when Korean speakers transfer their first language features or structures — putting the subject in front and raising the tone at the end of the sentence in a why-question sentence (in terms of Western European languages) — because the recipients (Dutch listeners) can rarely distinguish whether it is a comment or a question. On some occasions, repetitiously and prosaically stressing on the topic is interpreted on the basis of colloquial Dutch standards as signaling disbelief and sarcasm.

Long (1983) proposes that input from non-native speakers becomes more comprehensible when native speakers modify the interactional structures of their conversations. For native speakers, relinquishing topic-control, selecting salient topics, treating topics briefly, managing new topics, and checking non-native speakers' comprehension are strategies that will alleviate interactional troubles in intercultural encounters. However, once troubles occur during foreigner talk, tactics like accepting unintentional topic-switch, requesting clarification, confirming one's own (native speaker) comprehension, and tolerating ambiguity can repair troubles.

Third, failed pragmatics, such as inappropriate language usage and prosodic features (e.g., dialect pronunciation, rising intonation, stress) in specific contexts, which are called "contextualization cues"(Gumperz, 1978), may easily result in miscommunication. When analyzing interactions between British teachers and Indian and Pakistani immigrant trainees, Gumperz (1978) finds that miscommunication is not simply based on misreading of sentence content, but on the familiarity and judgments of prosodic cues, deictic pronouns, and the use of interjections ("yes" and "no"). Another example of failed pragmatics is the statement, "Exact change, please," from

a West Indian bus driver (Gumperz, 1982). The statement, though commonly used by all London bus drivers, is interpreted as rude and threatening because the driver applied Indian prosodic conventions and stressed the last syllable, "please." Tyler and Davies (1990) also find potentially damaging mismatches of discourse strategies on linguistic and pragmatic levels. While most Americans typically perceive "sorry" as an expression of showing sympathy, an international teaching assistant uses "sorry" quickly followed by the conjunction "but," which makes the student perceive the assistant as being cold.

Finally, miscommunication may be caused by the misattribution of group identities. Though many researchers (Giles, 1977; Giles & Johnson, 1987) have devoted their efforts to explaining communication behaviors (e.g., choices of linguistic codes) and group identity maintenance from the perspectives of social and psychological bases (e.g., ethnolinguistic identities and stereotypes), very little research focuses on discourse features of miscommunication and identity issues in intercultural settings.

Negotiation of Meaning

The term "meaning negotiation" is used to refer to modifications and re-constructions of interactions when interlocutors "anticipate, perceive, or experience difficulties in message comprehensibility" (Pica, 1994, p. 494). Some researchers (Gass & Varonis, 1985; Varonis & Gass, 1985a, 1985b) call the process of encountering and repairing comprehension troubles *negotiation*. Negotiated communication provides conversation participants with hopes of social-linguistic reconciliation, especially in problematic communication situations (Gass & Varonis, 1991). The process of negotiation, according to Gass and Varonis (1991), can provide conversation participants space to clarify and elaborate the insufficient information of previous utterances.

Various labels are used to identify negotiation processes. These labels, though indicating the same component features, refer to distinct functions in the discourse process. To describe and categorize how interlocutors sustain interactions and avoid communication breakdown, the broader categories of *strategies*, such as clarification requests, confirmation checks, and comprehension checks, refer to speakers' utterance planning, whereas *tactics* refers to utterance and interactional repairs (Long, 1983). Another set of labels is proposed by Varonis and Gass (1985a, 1985b); for example, *indicators* and *triggers*, are used to analyze the process and structure of negotiations. Clarification requests and confirmation checks, which may both serve as *indicators*, signal that an utterance has initiated a non-understanding. The term *trigger* refers to an "utterance or portion of an utterance on

the part of the speaker which results in some indication of non-understanding on the part of the hearer" (Varonis & Gass, 1985a, p. 74).

For NS/NNS interactions, negotiation, as a process, not only provides opportunities for both interactional participants to focus on message meanings and forms, but also helps non-native speakers to comprehend better and recall the words and sentences in the original versions of discourse (Pica, 1994). Negotiations are usually initiated in one of the following six forms (Varonis & Gass, 1985a, p. 77): explicit indication of non-understanding (e.g., *pardon?, what?, I donit understand*); echoing a word or phrase from previous utterance; non-verbal response (e.g., silence or *mmmm*); summary (e.g., *Do you mean*); expression of surprise (e.g., *Really? Did she?*), inappropriate response; or overt correction (e.g., *you say you don't have . . . , I don't have . . .*). In addition, negotiation may be shown in forms of speech-turn repairs in syntax or pronunciations (Norrick, 1991; McHoul, 1990; Schegloff, 1991), of phrasing other's meanings, of repeating a message verbatim, of segmenting a message (Pica, 1994, p. 507), and of interrupting speech turns (Yeh, Ash & Lee, 1996).

Varonis and Gass (1985a) find that negotiation routines are much more common in intercultural interactions (NNS/NNS & NS/NNS) than in intracultural interactions (NS/NS) because there are more utterances that are uninterpretable in conversations involving NNSs. They also point out that the most "dangerous" situation arises when both participants lack shared backgrounds, linguistic systems, and specific beliefs, yet do not seek to negotiate meanings. This finding implies that familiarity with conversational topics and with interpreting other's utterance, and participation in interactions will increase the opportunities for and effectiveness of negotiations

The greater nativeness, fluency, and control of NSs (or advanced NNSs) will affect the conversational participation of NNSs (Beebe & Giles, 1984). Zuengler and Bent (1991) find that NNSs produce more fillers (e.g., *oh, yeah*) and more back-channels (e.g., *mhmm, I see, yeah, sure*) than their native interlocutors when conversation content involves an area in which both NNSs and NSs have expertise. Only when NNSs posses greater expertise do they participate actively and talk more than their NS partners. Norrick (1991) concludes that participants with more language ability or background information feel they are more responsible to effect repairs; in addition, the negotiation of who is able to initiate repairs depends on whose language ability enables them to recognize and correct errors. Norrick finds that threats to a speaker's face lessened or disappeared in the on-going interactions when the corrected speakers viewed the repair as friendly help.

"Third Tongue Communication": NNS/NNS Interactions

Among the very limited investigations of non-native speakers using a common second language to communicate, Varonis and Gass (1985a) compare differences of non-native speakers interacting in dyads with native and non-native speakers interaction in dyads. Four dyads of NS/NS and four NNS/NS dyads were compared with 14 NNS/NNS dyads. The results show that NNS/NNS conversational dyads spent more time in negotiating than the other pairs (NS/NS and NS/NNS) in order to understand one another. The results also indicate that the greater the difference in language background and proficiency, the greater the amount of negotiation in the conversation between non-native speakers.

Varonis and Gass suggest several reasons for the NNS/NNS negotiation model. First, they note that the negotiation process provides conversational participants with a great amount of comprehensible input. Second, in the NNS/NNS dyads, participants usually recognized their "shared incompetence." Therefore, indicating non-understanding to their conversational partners does not threaten the other's "face." Third, the greater frequency of negotiating meaning in NNS/NNS than in NNS/NS dyads makes apparent the unequal status among interactional participants in terms of language as a medium. NNSs will manifest their weakness in linguistic competence and give higher status to their NS interlocutors during the negotiation. Under these conditions, NNSs tend to reduce or avoid opportunities to negotiate with their NS interlocutors.

Meeuwis (1994) creates interactional domains for NNS/NNS interactions by investigating interactions during training sessions conducted in English for South Korean and Tanzanian junior engineers by Belgian (Flemish) instructors. By examining video and audio recording from a pragmatic-discoursal perspective, Meeuwis finds that communication difficulties in NNS/NNS interactions result from interlocutors' relying on pragmatic knowledge drawn from their mother tongues. In terms of the interactional level of communication difficulties, Meeuwis points out that yes/no confusion and topic prominence are two major sources of communi ion frustrations. Non-native speakers usually transfer first language linguistic features to the second language, such as using the "agreement-disagreement system" rather than the positive-negative answering system. Communication breakdown or conflicts occur when non-native speakers transfer their linguistic structures from their mother tongues, and the intent of this transferring process is not understood or is misperceived by other non-native speakers.

Though yes/no confusion and misconstrued speech acts cause difficulties between non-native speakers, Meeuwis points out that the distinctive character of NNS/NNS interactions is that non-native speakers mutually recognize and allow for repairs and meaning negotiation to clarify their real intent. In addition, because both parties

have rather restricted familiarity with the illocutionary signals of the common language (English), the pragmatic sense of their linguistic utterances has no influence on the success of the interaction.

Discussions of NS/NNS and NNS/NNS interactions

The salient issues and interactional features in NS/NNS interactions, as reviewed above, provide following features for intercultural interactions. These features generalize from NS/NNS interactions, special concerns, or communication phenomena to NNS/NNS interactions that will be discussed. Research questions which this project is pursuing will be proposed following a discussion of these features.

Feature 1: Interacultural interactions include simplifying and clarifying process.

Varonis and Gass (1985a) partially verify that non-native speakers do attempt to clarify other's meanings in their interactions to improve their understandings to others' utterances. Not enough research, however, explores how non-native speakers simplify their language forms when interacting with another non-native speakers. When previous research finds that simplifying processes occur under the circumstance of one participant in the interaction converging to the other's linguistic capacity, it is worth exploring whether simplifying processes exist and whether they serve different functions in NNS/NNS interactions. In addition, how simplifying and clarifying processes are characterized and function between non-native speakers needs to be investigated, as well as other verbal and/or non-verbal features which surround these process and occur uniquely in NNS/NNS interactions.

Feature 2: Host language fluency has a dominant role in interactions.

In Gumperz' various investigations of NS/NNS institutional discourses (e.g., Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 1982b, Gumperz, 1982, Gumperz, 1992), with the advantage of operating in the majority language and being empowered to decide the consequence of conversations for non-native speakers, native speakers are usually less accommodative to their non-native interlocutors and force them follow the interactional structure with which the native speakers are familiar. In NNS/NNS interactions, when participants from different linguistic backgrounds use a common second language to communicate, the participant who possesses greater language competency will possibly dominate the interaction by clarifying and by initiating repairs. However, when relative language competency becomes difficult to distinguish, for example, in daily conversations, factors like perceived social hierarchy (e.g., teacher-student roles; seniority), implied by Meeuwis, may determine who takes the dominant role in interactions. More investigations are needed to look into how dominant roles are characterized in NNS/NNS interactions when both interlocutors are not fluent in their common second language; and how and why members in

NNS/NNS communities designate dominant roles to certain members.

Feature 3: Knowledge of conversation topic influences participation.

Though Zuengler and Bent (1991) have found that content domain will influence interactional participation in NS/NNS interactions, there is no explicit evidence to verify whether knowledge of conversational topic influences participation in NNS/NNS interactions. In a general sense, interactional participants with relatively greater knowledge of content domain will participate more than those who have less knowledge of the content domain. The issue of members' participation in NNS/NNS interactions also deserves further investigations. Since the advantage of linguistic competency and fluency in the NS/NNS interaction is no longer the greatest factor of power distribution, factors in various NNS/NNS social contexts which influence members' participation is still an intact topic for intercultural communication.

Feature 4: Clarifying and negotiation processes facilitate interactions and understanding for interactional participants.

Previous investigations (Varonis & Gass, 1985; Meeuwis, 1994) verify that non-native speakers not only clarify and negotiate meanings with each other, but also spend more time in clarifying and negotiating processes when interacting with one another than when interacting with native speakers. Yeh et al. (1996) find that non-native speakers not only use repair-initiations to request meaning clarifications, but also apply interruptions and simultaneous talk in the interactions to increase information processing in the NNS/NNS interaction. When and where, why and how, NNSs engage in clarifying and negotiating processes to improve understandings of non-native interlocutors is another worthy question to explore. Since linguistic fluency is often constrained between NNSs, searching for times and places where NNSs are engaging in clarifying and negotiating processes might be incorporated with investigating other verbal or non-verbal features which functionally facilitate understanding, as suggested in feature 1.

Feature 5: Flexibility towards interlocutors' socio-cultural and socio-linguistic differences will facilitate interactional processes.

According to the literature (Gumperz, 1982a; Gumperz, 1982b, Gumperz & Gumperz-Cook, 1982; Meeuwis, 1994; Tyler and Davies, 1990), different logic and linguistic habits could result in misunderstanding in message interpretations. Being flexible and open to communication patterns and expectations can increase opportunities to understand foreign partners' intents and purposes of communication performance. During

NNS/NNS interactions, participants not only construct a comprehensible output in their second language, but also struggle with linguistic structures and socio-cultural norms of both their first and second languages. In this complicated process, to learn the socio-cultural and socio-linguistic backgrounds of their interactional partner in a short time seems impossible. However, in order to interpret messages or to avoid misunderstanding during such interactions, non-native speakers may adopt a contextual pattern from the interaction. This contextual pattern could involve either explicating their partners' utterances or neglecting offensive parts of utterances from their partners, or, if non-native interlocutors both have a sufficient degree of pragmatic familiarity with the common second language, speech norms and patterns of that language could serve as a standard. Participants in NNS/NNS interactions must adopt a contextual socio-linguistic pattern in the interaction in order to interpret messages correctly and avoid misunderstanding.

Methodological Issues

Based on previous results and findings in NS/NNS and NNS/NNS interactions, this paper discusses, modifies, and integrates communication features for NNS/NNS interactions. Each communication feature proposed can be extended to research questions, propositions and hypotheses for investigating NNS/NNS interactions in various social contexts. In earlier sections, this paper proposes five communication features for NNS/NNS interactions that suggest future investigations may verify or falsify these features. Before researchers operationalize these communication features, two methodological issues need to be noticed when handling linguistic and interactional data for non-native speakers: Investigators' cultural and interpretation biases, and the legitimacy of investigators' membership knowledge.

The Investigators' Cultural and Interpretation Biases

In the past, interactions between non-native speakers are mostly examined in classroom contexts or laboratory settings. Among research devoted to NS/NNS and NNS/NNS interactions, the first methodological problem appearing in both the investigations of NS/NNS and NNS/NNS interactions is that native researchers usually possess powerful and dominant prejudices toward the settings that they analyze (Singh, Lele, & Martohardjono, 1988; Wagner, 1996). Regardless of using laboratory surveys or ethnographic interpretations, researchers (e.g., Gass & Varonis, 1985; Pica, 1994a, 1994b; Varonis & Gass, 1985a, 1985b) utilize their linguistic and cultural knowledge as native and competent members to interpret and examine foreign language interactions where they are not even involved in the interactions. In other words, researchers impose a cultural interpretation

system on interactions when conducting analyses. Non-native participants in the interactions, as a result, are not "subjects," but "objects," or "guinea pigs", who deliver "linguistic evidence" for researchers to analyze (Wagner, 1998).

To avoid a sociocultural bias towards native speakers and to uncover and portray foreign language data from a neutral viewpoint, participants' membership knowledge should be counted in research investigations of intercultural interactions (Moerman, 1988; Seedhouse, 1998; Wagner, 1996, 1998). While analysts dealing with foreign language interactions "feel" a problem, participants in intercultural interactions may not orient to such a communicative problem (Seedhouse, 1998; Wagner, 1998). Seedhouse (1998) explains why analyzing foreign language interactions demands a membership knowledge of interactions, when he assesses an excerpt from a conversation of a German native speaker and a Greek non-native speaker and asserts that

> the participants jointly create an interlanguage and 'interculture' through the details of their talk. There is a *reflexive* relationship between interaction and culture here. It is the use of those particular linguistic forms, topics and types of interactional moves which talk the 'interculture' into being. (p. 92)

To include potentially relevant information and membership knowledge of talk-in-interaction, an analysis linking talking and culture should demonstrate substantial characteristics which are "*actually* procedurally relevant to those participants at that moment" (Seedhouse, 1998, p. 93). Descriptions of how non-native talk in interaction is organized and of how speakers create orderliness may help the analyst to reconstruct the perspective and knowledge of the participants in talk.

The Legitimacy of the Investigators' Membership Knowledge

Another methodological issue needs to be clarified whenever researchers investigate NNS/NNS interactions. They need to interpret the results of NNS/NNS interactions based on the interlocutors' membership knowledge during the interactions. Researchers can supply their interpretations with the results of participants' interviews or self-report questionnaires to declare that the results of the investigations are coherent to participants' perceptions or knowledge of their interactions. Otherwise, claiming legitimacy of investigators' membership knowledge of the speech community or interactions can prevent investigators from being criticized as dominant and subjective.

However, Moerman's legitimacy as an American ethnographer and as a participant-observer in the Thai community has been questioned and criticized (cf. Hooper, 1990-1991; Mandelbaum, 1990-1991). Choosing to

describe Thai community by using qualitative research methods. Moerman (1988) combines ethnography and conversation analysis to describe and analyze a Thai speech community. While Hopper states, "I am impressed by the self-inclusive pronoun 'our' with which Moerman claims adoptive membership in the tribe of Conversation Analysts" (p. 162), a participant-observer who is affiliated with the community and capable of portraying the community from the standpoint of an expert informant and native informant of the speech community can more objectively account for communication problems, patterns, and behaviors that occur in the foreign language interaction. Ethnographers or conversation analysts, who observe or analyze a speech community involving foreign language data, need to be fluent in at least two languages to be competent to parse and comprehend interactions involving non-native speakers.

Conclusions

This paper first generalizes five communicative features from inference theory, communicative accommodation theory, and the findings and results of previous intercultural interactions. These communicative features are modified and discussed under a framework in which interlocutors on the scene share a common foreign language. Second, this paper reminds researchers of two methodological issues when interpreting linguistic and interactional data. Instead of imposing researchers' cultural and linguistic biases on interactions, researchers must interpret interactions from the perspective of interaction participants rather than from the perspective of a linguistic competent third party. In other words, researchers need to either consider interlocutors' membership knowledge of the interactions as the primary source of their interpretations, or carefully announce their legitimate knowledge of the interactions.

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